

November 14, 2005

FCC 05-231 Closed Captioning

Dear sir/madam,

As 2006 draws close it is very clear that captioning will NOT be provided as required unless the FCC pulls up it's bureaucratic boot-straps and starts ENFORCING rather than suggesting, implying, or requiring with mere ink on paper. It is obvious that much of the caption on today's TV programming is actually "craction" (I say this with the greatest respect to the closed captioners themselves).

Why is this so? Stripping of captions as programming is handed down to local stations, neglect by some stations and networks to even consider providing the access that is required. I recently met a number of people in Holyoke, particularly those affiliated with Western Mass Association of the Deaf and Hearing Impaired and learned that they have been meeting with local stations for more than a decade and a half to NO AVAIL!

While I know the complaint mechanism should start at the bottom and work up, it is clear in many instances that there is no resolution at the local level. We need some political clout here.

Things to address:

1. Quality of captioning – this depends on many factors but passing along the signal cleanly will provide us with what was actually entered as the captions. We can then judge – further – on quality. Captioners that I know and have worked with are consummate professionals and in general provide a high degree of quality through their work.
2. Captions for shows yet not advertisements – or vice versa – is totally annoying. Am I not worthy of the sales pitch provided by these ads?
3. Dropping captions in middle of programs. This occurs frequently and causes severe stress to my kids and wife who are hearing and simply want to sit down with their dad as a family and watch a simple program. I am not even considering my stress in this item.
4. Scripted captions. These drop much of the content and will not follow any ad-libbing that is necessary when breaking news is announced. Scripted captions are not captions... they are scripts and should be identified and differentiated as such.

5. Emergency captioning: Unfortunately this category is pathetic and dangerous and MUST be rectified immediately.